

The University of Chicago

FRONTIER MISSIONARY LIFE

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY

1936

By
CHARLES T. THRIFT, JR.

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FRONTIER MISSIONARY LIFE

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Most of the people to whom the missionaries of the American Home Missionary Society¹ ministered in the South were leading the rugged lives of frontiersmen, and frontier life is never easy. The missionaries themselves, though usually far above the average frontiersman in educational achievements, were not exempt from the hardships and privations of the frontier. Indeed the very nature of their tasks often made them feel the harshness of their environment even more keenly than did the average settler. In the maze of theological problems, interdenominational conflicts, slavery agitation, and the routine duties of a missionary, one easily loses sight of the fact that the principals involved in all these enterprises were self-sacrificing men of high ambition. Frequently they were men with families, from the more thickly settled North. The purpose of this essay is to call attention to the human side of the missionary enterprise, the suffering entailed by the lack of material possessions, by the lack of books, by sickness, and sometimes by physical violence at the hands of fellow-men. The hardships to which the missionaries were subjected changed progressively with the shifting Southern frontiers.

Money is usually scarce with frontier folk, and with that ministerial segment of frontier society affiliated with the American Home Missionary Society money was characteristically scarce. Coupled with it was a philosophy rather widespread in the South that opposed the payment of "wages" to ministers, which still further reduced the funds the ministers might otherwise have received. In addition to these two material handicaps, missionaries of the American Home Missionary Society were subjected to a third restraint in regard to their incomes, a regu-

¹ This essay deals exclusively with missionaries of the American Home Missionary Society laboring in the South between 1826 and 1861. All letters referred to are found in the American Home Missionary Society Collection in the Hammond Library of the Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago. The letters from missionaries in the South, as well as in the whole area served by the Society, are filled with "human interest stories."

lation of the Society which demanded that their whole energies be given to the work of the ministry and forbade such secular pursuits as teaching and farming as means of supplementing meager salaries. Occasionally a missionary was forced into some additional employment by actual want, in violation of the Society's rules, thus making him subject to dismissal as a missionary as well as to ecclesiastical censure. Many of the missionaries, as was quite general among Presbyterian clergymen, had taught schools before accepting commissions from the Society. Consequently, when incomes were insufficient for the necessities of life, many missionaries organized small schools, which, due to the scarcity of teachers, were lacking in almost every community. They justified their action to the officials of the Society on the grounds that in this manner they exerted an influence over the youth that could never come from the pulpit alone. The obstacle to such action, however, was a clause inserted in almost every commission which set the maximum salary the missionary might receive (rarely in excess of \$400 and usually about \$300). The commission further provided that this entire amount was to be raised from the people ministered to, in so far as possible, for ministerial labors solely, the Society pledging itself to pay from one-third to one-half of the total amount promised. If nothing was paid locally, then the missionary was entirely dependent on his salary received from the Society. These provisions, together with the small amounts usually guaranteed, were a constant source of trouble and hardship. Many missionaries were forced to find additional means of support, in spite of the regulations against it.

The number of ministers who supplemented their meager incomes by serving as postmasters is surprising. Numerous examples of this are found around 1830, but even this was held to be in violation of the terms of the Society's commission, despite the fact that frequently no salary was received for the postal function. One missionary wrote that it was a rather widespread practice in North Carolina for ministers to act as postmasters "inasmuch as it only requires about thirty minutes a week and entitles the minister to free postage on his letters and papers." The frank of the missionary as postmaster appears quite frequently on quarterly reports to the Society. Among the postmaster-ministers associated with the Society were Asa Brooks, at French Creek, Virginia; Daniel Gould, at Tabor, North

Carolina; S. L. Graham, at Bullocks, North Carolina; and David Humphreys, at Rock Mills, South Carolina.

Often the missionary, after accepting a commission forbidding additional employment, was forced to decide which of his obligations was more sacred, that to the Society or a debt unavoidably contracted. Some who chose the latter were quite frank in notifying the officials of the Society while others kept it secret until forced to reveal it. Perhaps there were many others of whom the Society never learned. George Painter, a missionary in Virginia, wrote in 1833 that he had consented to teach a school for a year. This, he said he would not have done "could it have been done consistently with my present embarrassed circumstances. . . ."² Quite the reverse of Painter's action is found in the case of Aaron Grigsby in Tennessee in 1841. Grigsby not only taught school but took up the practice of medicine, leaving a part of the territory for which he was commissioned entirely without services. None of this was revealed to the officials of the Society until Isaac Anderson so notified them and Union Presbytery preferred charges against Grigsby for his action. In defense of his conduct Grigsby wrote that he presumed the following communication from the Society was sufficient authorization for engaging in "secular business": "with regard to your engaging in teaching it is best to avoid if possible; the ministry is a work great enough for any man or any angel; and if you can possibly be sustained, better good unquestionably will be secured. . . ." He wrote in addition:

. . . knowing my necessity, and believing from your reply to my inquiry about teaching, that it would be no violation of your confidence, and the unusual amount of Sickness demanding it, I consented to practice medicine some. In doing this, however, I was prevented from Church duties some 3 or 4 Sabbaths in attending to my neighbors. . . .³

From his medical practice he reported that he received about one hundred and fifty dollars during the year. Because Grigsby "had manifested a Christian Spirit before the Presbytery" no further action was taken against him.⁴ The Society, however, discontinued his commission.

R. H. Snoddy advised the Secretary that with the seventy-five dollars granted him by the Society he had received a total of

² George Painter, Drapers Valley, Virginia, April 22, 1833, to Absalom Peters.

³ Aaron Grigsby, Knoxville, Tennessee, July 1, 1849, to Milton Badger.

⁴ G. S. White, New Market, Tennessee, October 9, 1841, to Milton Badger.

one hundred and fifteen dollars for a year's work, and that he was unable to live on it. "I have been compelled," he wrote, to devote part of my time to farming. . . . and to get some money to assist in paying my debts, I have a three months school on hand. . . . for which I will get the small some [*sic*] of forty dollars. . . . I have no doubt but you would prefer your missionary to be free from such employment. I would be glad also.⁵

He also wrote that when he attended the fall meeting of his Presbytery that he had been forced to borrow an overcoat and also money for the trip, "and when I sent to borrow the money I got only ten cents." The Society took no action against him.

Cephas Washburn, missionary in Arkansas, wrote the Society expressing gratitude for the small donation granted him but advised that he would be unable to support a family on the appropriation from the Society and the money received locally from the churches. He found it necessary to secure an additional income due to the fact that he was forced to build a new house. The privations of frontier living conditions he described thus:

Hitherto we have lived in a log cabin only 14 by 15 feet and very open and cold. Not only the comfort but the health of my family requires that I should have a better house. The house I intend building will consist of only one room on the ground, with a chamber to be my study.⁶

Washburn likewise supplemented his salary by teaching school.

Occasionally, permission was sought in advance, before engaging in some additional pursuit, but the Society was loathe to grant it. One missionary wrote to ask if he would be allowed "to cultivate a small crop during the summer."⁷ Similar requests were sometimes made for schools.

The meager income of the missionaries is attested to in a few random selections. Isaac Anderson wrote in 1842 that the average salary of the settled ministers in Tennessee "would not amount to \$100."⁸ The following year a missionary in Arkansas wrote that he received nothing locally except "from my elder. . . . [who] pays fifty dollars annually."⁹ "I have not received (apart from your ever timely assistance)," wrote a missionary in Virginia, "the sum of \$35 for my two years' missionary

5 R. H. Snoddy, Knox County, Tennessee, November 13, 1841, to Milton Badger.

6 Cephas Washburn, Bentonville, Arkansas, January 22, 1842, to Milton Badger.

7 L. C. Brown, Wytheville, Virginia, January 8, 1849, to Milton Badger.

8 Isaac Anderson, Maryville, Tennessee, January 25, 1842, to Milton Badger.

9 Cephas Washburn, Bentonville, Arkansas, April 1, 1843, to Milton Badger.

labor.”¹⁰ Another in the same state the following year revealed that he had been paid only fourteen dollars locally.¹¹ Even with these meager amounts to report, the missionary often had not received them in cash but in trade “at trade price, which . . . is about thirty three percent above cash price. . . .”¹²

Since the Society was governed in its contributions to the missionaries by the amount pledged locally, being more willing to grant a hundred dollars if the local churches raised two hundred than if they raised only fifty, many subscription lists were “padded” in order to secure larger appropriations, thus leaving the missionary to suffer. This practice was more common when the missionary was to be a stranger sent by the Society than when the churches were asking aid for a particular man already living among them who knew their financial standing. Illustrative of this type of procedure is the following complaint from a newly arrived missionary in western North Carolina who found there was a “lethargy about collecting that portion that was collectible.”

I came here under a promise of \$300 dollars, mostly produce and all. A salary was not offered, nobody was responsible, and on looking over a subscription, I find that boys and girls and anybody subscribed to make out a certain amount. And to such questions as follows I received such ans. as follows . . . Who subscribed this 5 dollars? Young Mr. — he has gone to Mississippi and who this \$5. Mr. — he is dead and the day of his sale is past and no claim was laid in. . . . and who this \$27? Mr. —. He is a poor fellow. I knew he never would pay it, but he is a well-wisher to the cause and subscribed only out of a good will!¹³

A missionary in Kentucky decried the fact that subscription papers were too frequently taken under what he termed a “Kentucky enthusiasm,” and that he was watching carefully to see that his new subscription paper was not padded like the previous one.¹⁴

Another way in which the missionaries were deprived of what they expected was through a misunderstanding of the terms

10 J. M. Graham, Edinburg, Virginia, September 24, 1851, to Charles Hall and Milton Badger.

11 Isaac N. Naff, Jeffersonville, Virginia, to Milton Badger.

12 Asa Brooks, French Creek, Virginia, December 9, 1828, to the American Home Missionary Society.

13 H. F. Taylor, Mills River, North Carolina, February 27, 1844, to the Secretaries of the American Home Missionary Society.

14 Simeon Salisbury, Franklin County, Kentucky, December 12, 1832, to Absalom Peters.

of their commissions. Many did not realize that the commissions set a maximum salary not to be supplemented by secular employment, until after they had accepted their commissions and worked under them for some time. Still others misunderstood the phraseology employed in the commissions. One excellent example of this is the case of Simeon H. Crane, missionary in Kentucky in 1827. Crane had been receiving a salary of \$100 quarterly from the New Jersey Missionary Society but he relinquished this to accept what he thought was an equal salary from the American Home Missionary Society. When he received only twenty-five dollars for his first quarter's salary he expressed great amazement, writing the Society for an explanation. It developed that his commission stated that he was to "receive . . . one hundred dollars in quarterly payments during the year, and to derive the remainder of [his] support from the people." This he understood to mean a yearly salary of four hundred dollars, but which the Society intended to mean a salary of one hundred dollars. When the Society refused to make any concessions about the matter, Crane resigned.¹⁵

There was a widespread sentiment against paying preachers. This feeling was most pronounced in northwest Georgia, where a missionary relates the following experience:

At the urgent request of a church fifty miles from here, a few weeks ago I went and held a meeting for them. I had no assistance, the weather was very warm, and I was quite worn down. When I was about to leave for my distant home over a bad road, they wished to know "when I could visit them again, they were so well pleased I must go back again, we like to hear you." No inquiry as to what I had paid for ferriage or night lodging in going; or whether that patched coat, and almost crownless hat were the best I could afford. Such trials are common to us here.¹⁶

Another missionary in Georgia found that people expected a minister to support himself and family by secular employment and

then preach three or four times every week in a profitable, interesting and zealous manner; without any reference whatever to any compensation for such labor. If he were to assert his claim, his right to any such assistance, his motive, and ministerial character and call, would be instantly called in question. . . . They call it preaching for money; and then infer that preaching for money and preaching for the glory of God at the same time, are incompatible and impossible the one with the other.¹⁷

¹⁵ Simeon H. Crane, Lexington, Kentucky, February 22 and May 9, 1827, to Absalom Peters.

¹⁷ William Swift, Cassville, Georgia, February 29, 1848, to Charles Hall.

¹⁶ W. B. Brown, Spring Place, Georgia, July 1, 1851, to Milton Badger.

Lack of funds at times embarrassed the missionaries to such an extent that they were threatened with suits over long overdue debts. Such a case as this was reported by a missionary in Tennessee who could not make a payment of twenty dollars to the estate of a deceased physician. The missionary felt, however, that there would be a bright side to such action, since, he wrote, "if I should be sewed [*sic*] the law will allow me four months stay. . . ."¹⁸ No suits were reported, but many missionaries were threatened with such procedure unless settlements could be made.

The extensive travel made necessary by the scattered character of their churches and church members often increased the missionaries' hardships far beyond those of the average frontier settler. A missionary in western Virginia had three churches, one of which was sixteen miles from his home "across a large mountain" and another twenty-six miles distant "across three mountains." With this situation he estimated that "on a moderate average" he crossed and recrossed about one hundred and fifty mountains and rode about two thousand miles annually in the performance of his duties.¹⁹ This same missionary informed the Society after several years of such activity that "no missionary will suit here so well as a single man, who will substitute his saddle for the study and the saddle bags for his library and ride almost constantly."

So extensive were the travels of one missionary in Tennessee that his health broke down completely under the strain. The extent of his travels is amazing. "Since my last report," he wrote,

I have continued to ride as formerly, at least 250 miles a month, and to preach monthly to 9 organized churches, and occasionally where we have no church organizations. The number of church members of whom I have charge is nearly 400 and these are scattered over 7 counties. To these scattered churches and members, I preached 66 sermons during the last 3 months.²⁰

A missionary in Kentucky rode an average of thirty miles a week when the roads were passable and when they were impassable he walked "ten miles through the snow to [his] appointments."²¹ In Virginia a missionary related how he fre-

18 R. H. Snoddy, Knox County, Tennessee, August 14, 1842, to Milton Badger.

19 Dugald McIntyre, Pleasant Hill, Virginia, November 5, 1829, to Absalom Peters,

20 Amzi Bradshaw, Shelbyville, Tennessee, August 1, 1846, to Milton Badger.

21 Benjamin Mills, Cynthiana, Kentucky, January 1, 1848, to Milton Badger.

quently went as much as six miles through the deep snow "to preach in a log cabin, through which the wind whistled on every side, and found no fire, and but two or three individuals to hear the glad tidings of salvation."²²

Frequently missionaries were forced to be away from home for several days at a time. During such trips they were exposed to all the hardships of the frontier, for accommodations for travelers were hard to find. J. P. Lestrade gives a vivid account of his experiences on a short trip into the mountainous section of Bedford County, Virginia, in 1848:

Having met with persons, at different times, from remote parts of the mountains, I determined on making them a visit. . . . I set out in the latter part of the month of October for the Peaks of Otter and the . . . gap. One who has never entered upon such a mission can form no adequate idea of the rude and loathsome manner in which many of the mountaineers live; and the consequent privations of him who attempts such a mission. Such an one must be prepared to suffer extreme fatigue by day, not only but also learn to do *without food and without rest at night*.

For instance, when wearied and worn, I have sometimes stopped, at a cabin in hopes of obtaining food for myself and horse. It is true, in no instance have I been denied. No one will suffer here for want of kind attention especially a minister of the Gospel; but to the contrary, such as they have, is always given without money and without price. And in this instance, had it been served up by other hands it would have been very good, but as it was, on being seated at the table my heart would sicken at the very sight of it. The filthy condition of their persons and every object before and around me, served as a complete check to my appetite, so that I have sometimes arisen from the table without eating a particle of food. At other times I have been satisfied with a boiled potato or a few boiled beans or a cup of milk as the case may be. This however might have been endured could I have obtained rest at night; but the loss of this was worse than all. The condition of their beds in many places was *intolerable*. I however, persevered until the object of my pursuit was accomplished and then returned home quite sick.²³

Disease was the scourge of many a Southern frontier. Epidemics of cholera, influenza and malaria were not uncommon. Many missionaries related in their reports the terrible ravages of disease. There was a rather widespread notion that the whole South had a "sickly climate." Indeed, this was called one of the most "formidable hindrances" to securing young missionaries for the South.²⁴ While, as many Southerners pointed out, there were portions of the South that were as free from disease as

²² Robert Gray, Rocky Mount, Virginia, April 10, 1848, to Milton Badger.

²³ J. P. Lestrade, Liberty, Virginia, December 28, 1848, to Milton Badger.

²⁴ Aaron Foster, Wellington, South Carolina, November 10, 1828, to Edward Beecher.

any portion of the country, yet certain diseases were common to the lowlands to which men from the North seemed especially susceptible. Often missionaries from the North requested the Society to send them into the South so that they might regain their health—an indication that the South's reputation for a "sickly climate" was not universally accepted. The rigors of the minister's life often aggravated slight disorders until they became serious. Missionaries along the coast, particularly on the eastern shore of Virginia, and in Louisiana, made it a practice to leave annually during the "sickly season."²⁵ Many missionaries asked to be transferred from the South to the "more healthy climate of Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois." Frequently illness in the missionary's family served to handicap him in his clerical duties. The rôle of "cook, nurse, and physician" was frequently assumed by the minister. Wives of the missionaries were not exempt from the unusually high death rate found among frontier women. Such deaths often threw the added duty of rearing children upon the minister, thus further encroaching upon his time.

The scarcity of books was more of a hardship to Presbyterian ministers than to others, since their college training made them more aware of this handicap. The American Tract Society supplied some reading material, but it was usually of the type designed for popular consumption rather than for a trained clergy. The American Sunday School Union likewise made some books available, but they too were usually for the use of the laymen. Lack of money, the uncertainty of transportation, and the difficulty of transferring money to New York or Philadelphia in payment for the books were serious difficulties facing the frontier missionary. Because of their great desire for more books, however, many of the missionaries made great financial sacrifices and resorted to all kinds of devices to secure them. A missionary in Tennessee in 1828 asked the secretary of the Society to secure a certain book and send it to him in the following manner::

... please send it to me by mail in pamphlet form, by divesting it of the boards, and putting it in by piece-meal. A sheet at a time could easily be carried by the mail and would be likely to come safely.²⁶

Another missionary wrote asking that a part of his quarter-

²⁵ N. C. Locke, Eastville, Virginia, August 6, 1846 and October 9, 1847, to Charles Hall; and John Atkinson, Baltimore, Maryland, October 1, 1851, to Charles Hall.

²⁶ A. S. Morrison, Blountsville, Tennessee, November 28, 1828, to Absalom Peters.

ly salary be used for purchasing certain books for him, if there was no other way for him to obtain them.

As to my ministerial labours, I have two remarkable disadvantages, one is for the want of a good library, which I am unable to procure owing to my imbarased circumstances of widowhood and no fund to procure a convenient library. . . . If the Church of Christ could be so benevolent of some books for a library I would be glad, if not I wish \$10 to be taken out of the third remittance to procure Henreys comment on the Old and New Testament. . . . I am willing even for \$15 of my third remittance to be used in that way, yet I do not know well how to spare the money, but the books I must have.²⁷

One missionary affirmed that he owned but two books, a Bible and Josephus' *Works*, and that as much as he needed other books, he saw little likelihood of being able to purchase them.²⁸ Two years later, his library not having grown in the meantime, he made the following observation about books in one of his reports:

I read in the Philadelphia and New York papers of many new and valuable books but this is the beginning and end of it, for one of them I never see. So that at least one fifth of the Subscription price of my paper is paid for a species of information which only serves to make my own condition the more miserable. Like Tantalus of old, perishing with eternal thirst waist deep in the purest, bubbling stream, yet cannot get one sip.²⁹

In 1851, the officers of the Society informed each missionary that through the kindness of some "benevolent gentlemen" sufficient copies of Dwight's *Theology* had been made available for free distribution to those missionaries not already possessing it. Each missionary was invited to notify the Society immediately whether or not he desired a copy of the work. Almost without exception, every missionary responded, except one or two who already possessed the book. Some of the answers are revealing. One responded:

Henry's commentary with a few small volumes of miscellaneous kind constitute my stock. I am not possessed of Dwight's *Theology*. Anything in the way of books that anyone may please to confer upon me, will be very thankfully received.³⁰

Another answered that he had owned the book by Dwight for

27 Robert H. Snoddy, Sevier County, Tennessee, September 4, 1833, to Absalom Peters.

28 John B. Saye, Bentonville, Tennessee, May 19, 1842, to Milton Badger.

29 August 1, 1844.

30 William A. McCampbell, Scottsville, Kentucky, February 28, 1851, to Milton Badger.

three years but that if some friend could send some other books "they would be more acceptable than the gratification of any personal want just now."³¹ John Atkinson, working on the eastern shore of Virginia, though he dared not "ask the gentlemen for it," confessed that he

should not hesitate much to take it if offered me. Then I should not have to buy it. And I might consult friend Dwight along with others of his kin.³²

A minister in western Virginia observed that he would be glad to obtain the book by Dwight since he had "few books of any description." The lack of books, he said, was his greatest grief, "for although the Bible is my constant companion I am often in darkness because I have not the money with which to purchase light."³³

"I stand in great need of books," a minister in Tennessee in 1854 wrote:

And now if you have it in your power to relieve me, without overtaxing the liberality of any one I would be greatly aided in my work and much obliged to you and others who might interest themselves in the matter.

What I most pressingly need are comments or expositions of the scriptures. I have Barnes' Notes. . . . and this is about the extent of my helps. . . . I have been in the habit of walking one half mile when ever I wanted to consult some writer on the Old Testament, to Mr. Lea's who is the only man probably in this county who has a commentary on the entire Bible.

I would be very happy to have Henry's or Scot's commentary, in fact scarcely any book would come amiss. It would be easier to make an invoice of the books I have than of those I *need*.³⁴

Since clothing was one of the main items of expense to the missionaries, many of the local societies, particularly those in New England, gathered boxes of clothing and sent them to the New York offices of the Society for shipment to needy missionaries. The officers of the Society directed these boxes to the missionaries whom they judged to be in the greatest need. These donations of clothing were made in addition to the sums already promised in the regular commissions. A letter from Cephas Washburn in Arkansas is illustrative of the manner in which the missionaries made application for these gifts.

³¹ Benjamin Mills, Frankfort, Kentucky, March 1, 1851, to Milton Badger.

³² John Atkinson, Eastville, Virginia, March 1, 1851, to Milton Badger.

³³ J. M. Graham, Edinburg, Virginia, March 20, 1851, to Milton Badger and Charles Hall.

³⁴ W. E. Caldwell, Cleveland, Tennessee, February 28, 1854, to the Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society.

I see on the cover of the Home Missionary that you receive donations in clothing for your missionaries, which you send to such missionaries as are needy, without abating the amount of their allowances in money. We have found the clothing of our family a very considerable part of our expenditures. . . . If we could receive donations of this description it would very considerably add to our comfort and diminish our expenses. . . . The articles we most need are winter clothing, boots, shoes, &c.³⁵

That these donations of clothing might be apportioned with greater efficiency, each missionary was asked, in 1851, to submit a description of his family, its size, age and build of each member, and any general information that might serve as a guide to the group gathering together articles of clothing for them. While all of the missionaries responded to this request, some included only the barest facts, while others entered into great detail including such items as each child's name, date of birth, color of hair, exact height and weight, and size of shoes worn. A missionary in Georgia, after giving a detailed description of his family, added, "in this country something plain and substantial is preferable for several reasons to that which is showy or very fine."³⁶ Another, after listing the full names of his six children added, "a fruitful vine is my wife Argyra."³⁷ Levi R. Morrison gave the following details of his family:

1st. my wife, Martha F. Aged 40 years. Just the right pattern of a woman—5 ft. 6 in. high, and not metamorphosed into a wasp either by tight lacing or bad tempers — rather slender however. . . .

3. a daughter, Margaret Jane, 14 years old. 5 ft. 4 in. high, rather slender — tucks her hair up behind, as if she had an idea of looking like a woman. . . .

If the ladies wish to know anything of humble servant he is a nice specimen of 46, 6 ft. 1 in high with a beautiful little nose a little over 3 in. long, broad shoulders, long arms, and the finest pair of knock knees that ever exchanged salutations with each other.

But to be serious. Our necessities are always pressing, and when an old garment can be mended no longer, it often creates a distressing debt to procure a new one. Eternal blessings on the kind hearts that profer such aid. They can hardly send it to the wrong missionary, whether to my family or not.³⁸

The reception of a box from the East was an event long to be remembered in the life of a missionary and his family. One gave a description of the events that transpired before the open-

35 Cephas Washburn, Bentonville, Arkansas, December 8, 1843, to Milton Badger.

36 W. B. Brown, Spring Place, Georgia, March 1, 1851, to Milton Badger.

37 William A. Taylor, Jonesville, Virginia, March 5, 1851, to Charles Hall.

38 Levi R. Morrison, Glade Spring, Virginia, March 1, 1851, to Milton Badger.

ing of a box that had been expected for many months. After the box had been taken into the living room, the whole family was called in for prayer. Following the prayer the missionary explained to his small children that the box had been sent by God, since he had put it into the heart of the good New England women to assemble it. Then followed the opening, when it was discovered that each article sent was "just what was needed."

Cases of bodily harm due to premeditated violence were rare, but the missionaries occasionally had to contend with this, or at least threats of it. John G. Fee, who made himself somewhat offensive to many of his neighbors because of his determination to exclude slaveholders from church membership, was threatened several times because of his position in regard to slavery. On one occasion a group of his enemies hired a man to beat Fee as he journeyed to one of his appointments.³⁹

This he attempted to do as I passed through a piece of woodland country of some three miles in width. Unexpectedly a friend rode some 6 miles that morning to hear me preach and stayed to go with me to my afternoon appointment, and just as Hannaks and his comrade made their attack or sally forth, up came a third friend. Hannaks could do nothing but curse and threaten until I got to my appointment. . . . after preaching, in company with my wife and another friend started for home, ten miles distant. On the way was again attacked by Hannaks; but finding he could not get his hands upon me, he jumped from his horse and threw three or four stones with great violence at me. . . .

The assailant was prosecuted and found guilty. Similar attacks were reported by other missionaries, especially when they had been active in opposing slavery or whiskey.

Other hardships which the missionaries experienced on the frontier varied widely with the individual cases. One felt that the lack of religious companionship such as he had at Princeton with fellow students was the worst thing which he faced.⁴⁰ To another the long separation from loved ones in New England was the severest trial.⁴¹ The excessive amount of pork in the diet was distasteful to still another.⁴² Sleeping on "scaffolds and sitting on stools" irritated others.⁴³ And so the individual hardships varied with individual tastes.

39 John G. Fee, Cabin Creek, Kentucky, January 1, 1848, to Milton Badger and Charles Hall.

40 William Sicles, Winchester, Virginia, December 3, 1827, to Charles Hall.

41 Daniel Gould, Tabor, North Carolina, June 23, 1828, to Absalom Peters.

42 Alanson Benedict, Quincy, Florida, February 23, 1829, to Absalom Peters.

43 Hervey Woods, Litchfield, Arkansas, May 19, 1835, to Absalom Peters.

Despite all these hardships, nearly any one of the missionaries would have chosen the same course over again had he that choice to make after having experienced something of the sacrifices involved. A statement by one of the missionaries doubtless expresses the attitude of all of them:

And notwithstanding we have to contend with difficulties and privations. Yet I do not regret that my steps have been turned to this field. Our situation is often such, that when one sack of flour or meal is out we do not know where the next is to come from, and frequently my horse must stand in the stable a week at a time with nothing to eat except a little hay evening and morning, yet these are but small sacrifices for Him who gave his *life* a ransom for his people.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Lee C. Brown, Dug Spur, Virginia, January 7, 1854, to the American Home Missionary Society.

